Minutes
Computer Science and Technology in Public School Task Force
May 8, 2105
Acxiom - 601 E. 3rd Street, Little Rock, AR 72201

Dr. James Hendren (Chair) called the meeting of the Computer Science and Technology in Public School Task Force (CSTTF) to order at 9:30 a.m.

The following members were present: Dr. Charisse Childers, Mr. Tom Chilton, Mr. David Hopkins, Dr. Brett Powell, Mr. Daryl Bassett, Dr. Tim Atkinson, Mr. Carl Frank, Mr. Gary Dowdy, Mr. Andy Mayes, Dr. Suzanne Mitchell, Mr. Rasesh Patel, Mr. Dave Wengel, Mr. Johnny Key and Dr. James Hendren.

Dr. John James was absent.

Chair Hendren introduced Governor Asa Hutchinson who thanked the members for leading the effort. He stated the CSTTF has elected a great chairman and expressed appreciation to agency directors and private sector leaders who will play a great role in driving out the CSTTF recommendations.

Governor Hutchinson discussed his computer science tour of high schools across the state. He stated that the focus of this tour is to encourage students to enroll in computer science courses. He is scheduled to visit, Rogers, Springdale, Fort Smith, Farmington, Conway, Mayflower, Jonesboro, Paragould, and Star City. He asked members of the CSTTF to promote this initiative everywhere they go. He also acknowledged that with three weeks of school remaining in most districts that there is a sense of urgency to disseminate the information.

The Governor noted Axciom's involvement in the initiative and discussed the visit he had with Axciom's Chief Executive Officer and President, Scott Howe. Mr. Howe was recently interviewed about Arkansas becoming a leader in computer science education by Wired magazine. The Governor emphasized that the state must promote a unified message. This unified message will assist Arkansas becoming known nationwide as a computer science education leader and being recognized by global industries as a state of innovation. He stated that it's going to take showing that Arkansas is training the coders of the future. He encouraged the CSTTF to make recommendations regarding what the role of private sector in this initiative should be. He stated that they should recognize that Arkansas has many partners in and out of state. He noted that finding the right models is important and that there is a need to secure and pair private sector funding with the $5 million appropriated by Arkansas. He stated that any funding allocated should not be used exclusively for training teachers but for novel incentive programs as well. Stressing that this is a unique time for our state, he suggested considering the implementation of computer program scholarships for schools that demonstrate the most involvement. The Governor asked the CSTTF for questions.

Superintendent David Hopkins was asked by the Governor to make remarks regarding the efforts of Clarksville School District (CSD). Superintendent Hopkins stated CSD placed one netbook in hands of each student in grades five through 12. Clarksville also set up the SharePoint system to provide lessons to students. The district will use distance learning because we don't have the teacher capacity at this time.

Commissioner Key was asked by the Governor to send a memo to school districts encouraging them to share a video from Code.org with the school's students. In addition, he asked that the memo encourage schools to hold an assembly, during which the Code.org video could be shown and students energized about taking computer science courses in high school (as the Governor is doing in some schools). The video is linked on the Governor's webpage.

The Governor asked for an update from the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE). Anthony Owen, Curriculum Specialist for ADE gave an update to the Governor and the members. Mr. Owen shared that ADE's current focus is on facilitating teacher training this summer and will continue working with/listening to the CSTTF to establish and modify short-term and long-term goals of the agency. He stated that ADE's major professional development push is comprised of the agency facilitating and supporting the Code.org (teacher trainer system) initiative, ADE provided PD, STEM Center/Coop offerings, and other statewide trainings. He stated there are currently 16 teachers who have volunteered to travel and participate in Code.org training. ADE has been receiving and responding to many inquiries from vendors about products they can offer to schools, ADE is advising vendors that their best opportunity to get their product in Arkansas schools for the 2015-2016 year is to work with the schools this spring and summer to inform them how the vendor's products will support teacher development and student growth.

Dr. Charisse Childers shared information about Arkansas Career Education (ACE) courses related to computer science. She stated approximately 240 instructors are currently teaching all of the CTE courses related to computer science. Of the 19 courses five are part of the Project Lead the Way (PLTW) program. PLTW is a science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) curriculum program used in over 6,500 schools across the country.

Dr. Suzanne Mitchell shared information about the Computer Science Professional Development Summer 2015 course offerings available through the Arkansas STEM Center University Network. Governor Hutchinson asked Dr. Mitchell to add PLTW and the Arkansas School for Mathematics, Sciences and the Arts (ASMSA) course offerings to the list. Mr. Carl Frank added that Coding Arkansas' Future will provide expanded computer science education courses for schools across Arkansas through ASMSA's digital learning program.

The Governor asked the members to let him know what else he should be doing as Governor or what the state should be doing to support this initiative. Chair Hendren and the CSTTF members praised the Governor for his efforts and thanked him for his time and efforts.

Chair Hendren stated that the main goal for the day was to categorize issues/concerns and form subcommittees. Before the work began he asked ADE and ACE for comments regarding student enrollment.

Anthony Owen shared information about the data ADE had reported regarding computer science course enrollment for the 2014-2015 school year. This data included identified courses, schools that reported offering the courses, and enrollment numbers reported. Dr. Childers shared information about the enrollment data reported by ACE. There were some discrepancies between ADE and ACE enrollment data. Mr. Bassett suggested that the CSTTF consider recommending the agencies establish a standard reporting system that included both of them. The CSTTF requested ADE compile and desegregate the data regarding sections of these various classes at the districts (what licensure the teachers hold, etc.).

Mr. Lee Watson, President of the Arkansas Venture Center served as facilitator for the work session. He asked the committee to identify the issues that stand in the way of successfully implementing and scaling computer science education in Arkansas. The following main categories surfaced from comments:
1. Awareness and Engagement
2. Resources
3. Professional Development and Training
4. Curriculum
5. Metrics, Data and Reporting Strategies

Members provided the names of the following vendors for teacher training options: CodeHS.org, Code.org, EAST, PLTW, Virtual Arkansas, Zuni Learning Tree, Microsoft IT Academy, Oracle Academy, ASMSA and the Arkansas Public School Resource Center.

Dr. Mitchell noted the Arkansas Computer Science Summit has been set for October 8, 2015 to coincide with the annual meeting of the Arkansas Academy of Computing scheduled for October 9 and 10, 2015.

Mr. Carl Frank moved and Tim Chilton seconded approval of the minutes from the April 17, 2015 meeting. The minutes were approved unanimously.

Dave Wengel stressed short term awareness of students and corporations. Kids need to know what is going on now, what has been done, and what kind of job opportunities in computer science that exist in Arkansas. We have a finite amount of time to get resources from corporate America while Arkansas has the reputation of leading in this area.

David Hopkins expressed concerns of fellow small school district Superintendents' ability to implement the courses next school year.

Five Task Force Subcommittees were formed as follows:
Awareness: Daryl Bassett, Tom Chilton, Gary Dowdy, Dr. Suzanne Mitchell, Rasesh Patel and Dave Wengel (Chair)
Curriculum: Dr. Tim Atkinson, Dr. Charisse Childers, Carl Frank (Chair), David Hopkins, Dr. John James, Andy Mayes, Johnny Key
Metrics: Dr. Tom Chilton, Dr. James Hendren, Dr. Brett Powell (Chair), Dave Wengel
Professional Development and Training: Dr. Tim Atkinson, Dr. Charisse Childers, Carl Frank, Johnny Key, Andy Mayes (Chair)
Resources: Daryl Bassett, Gary Dowdy, David Hopkins, Dr. John James, Dr. Suzanne Mitchell (Chair), Rasesh Patel

Next scheduled meeting:
June 8, 2015, 1:00 p.m.

Next scheduled subcommittee meetings:
Metrics, May 18, 2015 at 1:00 p.m., Arkansas Economic Development Commission.
Awareness, May 20, 2015, Little Rock Tech Park/Venture Center.
Resources, tele-conference, May 22, 2015, 9:00 a.m.
Curriculum and Professional Development and Training, May 27, 2015, 1:00 p.m., Arch Ford Educational Services Cooperative.

The meeting adjourned at 1:30 p.m.